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Miss, Mrs. Harrison Gray
Report on Donations
for Soldiers.

1864



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Mrs Harrison Gray Otis

R E P O R T

OF

MRS. HARRISON GRAY OTIS

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF

DONATIONS TO SOLDIERS.



B O S T O N :

J. E. FARWELL & COMPANY, PRINTERS TO THE CITY,

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CITY OF BOSTON.



REPORT

OF

MRS. HARRISON GRAY OTIS

ON

DONATIONS FOR SOLDIERS.

1864.

In Board of Aldermen, May 16, 1864.

Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

Attest :

S. F. McCLEARY, *City Clerk.*

REPORT.

Boston, 29th April, 1864.

MRS. HARRISON GRAY OTIS presents her compliments to His Honor the Mayor and the gentlemen of the Donation Committee of the City Government of Boston, and informs them that on the 29th of April, 1864, she completed the third year of her most interesting work in Boston for the Soldiery, having commenced it in the Evans House in 1861, and therein remained two years; and one year at 126 Tremont Street, opposite Park Street Church. During this period she has not left her post for one day, excepting on Sundays and religious festivals, and has found abundant occupation in the distribution of all manner of useful articles conducing to the comfort and welfare of the troops, as well as sick, suffering, and dying soldiers, in their tents, hospitals, and others in their own homes. These invaluable articles, from the opening of her house have been, until now, profusely given in an unfailing manner by the patrons of the establishment, to whom her profound thanks are, with the most heartfelt gratitude, tendered for their unbounded confidence in her efforts and their generosity and thoughtfulness. It is indeed a remarkable case of hands never having been stayed, or diverted from a point of interest; and the incalculable advantages derived from such a condition of things, so satisfactory, can hardly be exaggerated in any shape or form. Thousands of soldiers and their families have blessed these willing givers, for not one cent has been begged, Mrs. Otis's whole

system having been based on voluntary donations: and you well know, gentlemen, she has not received any pecuniary assistance from yourselves whatever. The original plan, a sort of bank of faith, has been thoroughly tested with perfect success, and no deviation, however slight, has been made from the opening of the house.

Many foreign officers have visited the establishment and published pleasant descriptions of its management, and expressed a desire to get up something of the sort in their own cities; the last received, being in the Swedish language, is the least intelligible.

The work being transferred to Tremont Street, it has prospered exceedingly, and necessarily increased from the large number of troops quartered at Readville, the furloughs of Regiments and returns of sick, wounded, and disabled soldiers, and the last six months have been more onerous than ever; but as the means, in money and effects, to supply the wants of the soldiers and solace the sufferers have been freely given, the labor has been most cheerfully performed and sanctified by the blessings bestowed by ever grateful recipients on unwearied benevolence, as exemplified in the variety and excellence of well-considered donations, of which Mrs. Otis has been the happy almoner.

As is naturally the case the soldier having, in countless instances, personally received comforts from Mrs. Otis, he, on his return home, reports himself to her, sick or well, and all that can possibly be effected is done, and kindly advice given for future conduct and relief. This has consequently placed her in relation with excellent charities. There seemed to exist an impression that no admission was given to the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, to those who could not pay: this was in all cases removed on application to Dr. Shaw, and much gratitude expressed at the treatment. At the Pemberton Square Hospital, under Dr. William E. Townsend, the same satisfaction was evinced for kindness received.

The Soldiers' Relief Fund, 56 State Street, has been a great comfort to the soldier under the kindly, sympathizing, and judicious treatment of Messrs. Sabine and Green, and The Home for Discharged Soldiers deserves the commendation and all the support that can possibly be bestowed upon it, completely exemplifying, as it does, its name, a home in truth and verity, as she well knows, having sent to its solacing and hospitable shelter hundreds of soldiers. May it long prosper and flourish, and, in good time, occupy tenfold the space it now does in public opinion. To the Massachusetts Bible Society, Mrs. Otis is greatly indebted for constant supplies, and believes she can state that no soldier has been neglected.

The ladies at The McLean Asylum, Somerville, under the care of Dr. Tyler, have made a large number of garments for the soldiers, and many thanks are due them for the admirable manner in which they have been finished.

The house has continued to be, in some degree, a place of refuge for friendless soldiers, nor has its ministrations been confined to our own State, no man having left it empty handed. The same numberless letters have been received from camp and hospital, imparting the encouraging assurance that nothing has been lost; indeed, the perpetual incoming of soldiers from the army renders the sending of parcels very facile and pleasant, the soldier much preferring to lose his own outfit than his comrade's.

During the seventeen months this Report covers there have been distributed four thousand dollars in money, and two hundred thousand substantial articles, comprising shirts, drawers, socks, mittens, soldiers' bags, pocket handkerchiefs, towels, comforters, blankets, pillows, night gowns, dressing gowns, and all kinds of hospital garments and stores, of wines, liquors, spices, tea, coffee, chocolate, sugar, &c.

Testaments, prayer books, tracts, and reading matter, have been abundantly supplied. Many donors presenting well-filled boxes and barrels, ready for hospital use, with the assurance

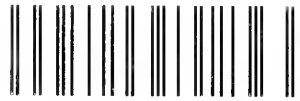
that they were properly packed ; these gifts, with their contents, have been considered but a single article in the enumeration.

That these noble benefactors of the soldier, so unwearied in well doing, who seem to have been born to do benefits, may receive here and hereafter the reward of their good works, is the constant prayer of a woman whom they have honored by their approval and confidence.

Gentlemen : Mrs. Otis submits to your inspection the books which verify the statements made in this Report, and returns her thanks to you for the privilege of serving the city of her birth and predilection, and for the kindness received during her stay in the establishment where she hopes to remain.

TO HIS HONOR MAYOR LINCOLN, AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF BOSTON.

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